

Child and Family Services Update

July 26, 2002

School Days

By Richard Anderson

"I am just a little kid. I go to elementary school. For me school is a bunch of things. Some are good and some are not so good. The good things are – friends, playing, learning neat things, and having grown-ups who care about me. The not so good things are kids who tease, being picked last, math stuff I don't understand, and grownups I don't know and trust."

Isn't this how most of us felt when we were in grade school? Most school children are very impressionable. At this age, school should be and usually is a pretty safe place, but sometimes, and for some children, school can sometimes be confusing and threatening.

When child protection grownups enter a child's school for an interview, it must feel to that child like a very strange thing is taking place in their lives. No matter how kind we are, or how much experience we bring with us, we are still strangers to the child, and we ask puzzling and difficult questions. I realize we are all sensitive to how scary this event must be to a child. It's not even that easy for us. Even going back to class afterward has to be very difficult. For all of these reasons, I would like to go over a few concepts with you, and, if I may, make a request.

When we go to interview a child, choose the location carefully. If we feel we need to do the interview at the child's school, we should make sure of the following:

- a. When parents are not alleged as causing the neglect of abuse, make sure parents have given permission and that the school is aware of the need for the interview and of the parental permission (whether CPS, In-Home, or Out-of-Home).
- b. Make sure the school is the safest and most confidential setting for interviewing the child (when the interview in the home or elsewhere would be more disruptive to the child, or might create a greater risk – the main example being when the parents are alleged as inflicting harm to the child, resulting in a greater risk if the child is interviewed at home).

I recently met with someone who works in a school. This individual wondered why we didn't do our protective services interviews at the end of the school day. She felt this would relieve some of the stress on the child, so that they don't have to return to the classroom upset and confused about what just happened in the interview.

Let's always remember our feelings as a child, and think about the impact our visits will probably have. Let's choose an interview time at the end of the day, or before lunch, or at least allow some time following the interview to help the child get comfortable before returning to the classroom. Perhaps we might talk with the child about their return to the classroom. Let's do what we can to help that child – who

might have been us – get through a difficult experience as smoothly as possible, and at the same time help those people who are responsible for and care about that child.

The Role Of The State Specialists

By Patti VanWagoner

The state specialists within Child and Family Services bring a broad range of knowledge and experience to child welfare. As I have been working with this team of specialists the last few months, I've come to appreciate the role that they play in maintaining continuity and integrity in the continuum of services offered by our agency. They have a key role in developing and maintaining program expertise and assuring program core skills and knowledge are fostered throughout the agency. What does this mean to a caseworker in the agency? Caseworkers will know that there is someone to connect to at the state office who will answer their questions, offer support, and be willing to research issues that pertain to what a caseworker needs to know to effectively carry out their work within the agency.

The state specialists function as a team. We are working together to build and strengthen our capacity to support the regions. We value and respect the work that is carried out on a daily basis by our line staff and supervisors. Our vision for the specialist team is to offer a connecting point for the regions. We believe that the Practice Model provides the framework for all of the work done within Child and Family Services. We will use the skills of engaging, teaming, assessing, planning, and intervening to assist in carrying out the Milestone Plan of the division.

Please contact the state specialist if you have any questions. We are here to help.

Patti VanWagoner	Deputy Director	801-538-4527
Angela Oliver Khairallah	Out-of-Home Services/Kinship Specialist	801-538-4316
Charlotte Gibbons	CPS Specialist	801-538-4149
Duane Betournay	Constituent Services/Legal Specialist	801-538-4341
Jerna Mitchell	New Employee Trainer	801-538-4409
Kate Jensen	Domestic Violence Specialist	801-538-3909
LeRoy Franke	Adoption/Permanency Specialist	801-538-4078
Midge Delavan	Training Coordinator	801-538-4404
Mike Chapman	Interstate Compact Administrator	801-538-4364
Reba Nissen	In-Home Care/Prevention Specialist	801-538-4103
Savania Tsosie	Indian Child Welfare Specialist	801-538-4146

Financing Child Welfare And Domestic Violence In Economic Downtimes

By Richard Anderson

It seems like it was several months ago, but it was actually just July 8th and 9th, that another special session of the legislature was held to reduce state budgets. All of us get extremely nervous when this happens. We never know what this may mean to us personally as well as professionally. It is also a time where we wonder if the value of our services is known or understood. Well, even though we feel that our programs should never be touched in reduction, I do believe we were treated fairly.

Imagine being a senator or representative on a human services appropriations subcommittee during economic hard times. You are making decisions about cutting services between child abuse/neglect, domestic violence, disabilities, aging services, mental health, and health. The debates in the minds, hearts, and open discussion rage between issues of cutting child protection or domestic violence services, depleting potentially life-supporting services to the aged or disabled, decreasing supports to those with mental illnesses, and stopping life-preserving health programs for the economically disadvantaged. The legislature took the task very seriously. We had our chance to provide priority areas for them to consider. These proposals cannot always be honored when they combine the budget pictures from several departments.

Just to let you know, Child and Family Services did not lose any additional staff in the last reductions. The total staff reductions from the three rounds of budget reductions, including those taken for fiscal year 2002 that will be carried into this current fiscal year, are 15 caseworker positions. We also lost 26 FACT positions. The region administrations have made this reduction in the most appropriate way they could through attrition, holding vacated positions open, transferring people to other areas, and having to let a few people go before finishing probation. The overall budget for this current fiscal year has been decreased by a total of 8.3%. We are not sure what the future holds regarding budgets for state government, but we will do our best to support you and keep you informed. Also, maybe you'd better not charge anything yet on that anticipated Christmas bonus!

How Many Foster/Adoption Placements Disrupt Before An Adoption Is Finalized?

By Linda Prince

Everyone who has been involved with a child who is free for adoption understands the many, many facets of finding an adoptive placement and the difficulties in providing supports to the children and potential adoptive parents.

If we look at the data for fiscal year 2002, Utah reports that 418 children were legally free for adoption and were in a foster/adoption placement where either a foster/adoption or adoption agreement had been completed. Only 10 (2%) of 453 of these placements disrupted during this past year.

As we review cases and listen to workers, we know there are more adoptive placement disruptions than the data shows.

Please enable us to accurately report this information by recording foster/adoption agreements, when appropriate, and by selecting placement termination reasons that indicate the reason the child was moved from a home.

SAFE has a placement removal reason “adoption failure” which will be changed to “adoption placement disruption” as was initially intended. Please use this reason for adoption placement disruptions.

In addition, our data needs to be able to indicate *why* children are moved from placements. The Out-of-Home Steering Committee has reviewed the placement termination reasons and will be adding meaningful codes to better enable workers to indicate reasons children are moved from placements. Watch for these new reasons in the near future and choose carefully when making a placement change.

Child Welfare Institute

By Jerna Mitchell

Save The Date!

That time of year is coming again
So mark your calendar fast.
Save this day, you won't want to miss,
You won't want to register last.

The dates are September 30th
And into October, 1 and 2
We really like to see you there
Please come, Oh do!!! Oh do!!!

You'll get to learn cool new things
As you attend the classes.
You'll see who gets the awards.
And you'll see your friends in masses.

Northern Region this year will host
This 'splenderifically' awesome event.
So plan on coming north that week,
It will be the best time you'll have spent.

Our Child Welfare Institute has been scheduled for the 1st of September and the 1st and 2nd of October in Ogden. Reserve the day on your calendars so that you are able to attend. You will soon be seeing the nomination forms for the awards. They include one person from each region who is given recognition for their outstanding work, a Lifetime Achievement Award, Partner Awards for those partners whose contributions are invaluable in our work, and the Marty Palmer Award.

It is a time to share with co-workers, network with partners, attend breakout sessions to increase your skills and knowledge, acknowledge those who are making the world a better place for Utah's children, and remember and celebrate the reasons you wanted to be a Child Welfare Worker.

This year will be extra wonderful, as we will be partnering with Substance Abuse. The breakouts on the 2nd of October will be offered conjointly with Substance Abuse and will address Child Welfare/Substance Abuse Issues. What an opportunity to learn more about an issue with which many of our Child Welfare clients struggle.

Lessons Learned At The Summer Institute

By Carol Miller

We've received some really great comments about wonderful lessons learned at the recent Summer Institute that we'd like to share with you. And we wish to express our thanks to everyone who attended, presented, and shared their thoughts with us!

Energy Psychology

By Millie Marie Green, DSW, LCSW

I have to admit that I was and still am a little leery about some of the Energy Psychology methods. It seemed too simple to be able to tap or touch away phobias or pain. But then on the other hand I have always been willing to try different things and am pleasantly surprised at how well many of them work. The first day we went we were told to think of a phobia that we have. I have always been afraid of heights. Well, actually, terrified would be a better word. When we hike I avoid edges and feel panicky when my teenage son hangs over the cliff edge so that he can see me break out in a cold sweat. Well, I went through the process, tapping, rolling my eyes and humming, and then more tapping. The thing is that it worked. I live on the top floor of our apartment building. I hug the wall as I walk to my front door and don't go out on my balcony. Well, that evening I walked to the edge of the front balcony and hung over it, no sweat, no fear. Later I went out on the back balcony, hung over the edge to talk to my neighbor, and my son teased me about my falling over the edge. Instead of passing out I hee-heed at his funniness and left him standing there with his jaw meeting his ankles.

Well, just in case it was a fluke I tried it with spiders the next day. I have been equally terrified of spiders and many of my friends and co-workers can testify that I am more likely to scream than anything else at the sight of a spider. I went through the tapping, eye rolling, humming, and more tapping process again over the spider

phobia. This weekend I got the chance to test it out. There was a harmless little brown spider in the shower. I took a paper cup, picked up the spider, and put it outside.

Later I discussed this with my daughter who is just graduating from Massage College. They learned the 'Healing Touch' method in school and use it on clients. Some people are nervous about getting their first massage. She says they can lay on the table, she can ask to touch their faces and do some Healing Touch points, and they will visibly relax.

I might be sold. I have to try it out more before I can commit though.

The Leadership Challenge

By Lana Spivey, LCSW

I really enjoyed this workshop. It was an opportunity to do some self-assessment and look at why and how some of the things that I do work. Likewise, I was able to understand why and how some of the things that don't work, don't. For example, I learned that I can achieve my own high expectations by breaking them down into more concrete, practical pieces. This will not only help me to achieve my goals, but help others that can get frustrated with me because my goals seem more like dreams oft times than reality.

Putting the information from this workshop about people's behavioral types with my own behavioral type let me evaluate ways that I could change the way I work with individuals, teams, committees, etc. to be a better contributing member. For example, I like to talk about the philosophy and imagine what things could look like, while other individuals on a team that I work with are more task oriented. I can be a stronger member of the team by limiting my philosophizing and being willing to look at concrete ways to accomplish tasks.

It was a good experience to look at my strengths and needs and how to use my strengths to meet my needs to support my becoming a better leader and a better team player.